

President Clinton. Oh, he wants to ask you a question. That's good.

Q. Prime Minister, can you explain, perhaps to the American people, why you think Mr. Pollard is worthy of release at this point?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Jonathan Pollard did something bad and inexcusable; he spied in the United States; he collected information on behalf of the Israeli Government. I was the first Prime Minister—and this is the first government—to openly admit it. We think that he should have served his time, and he did. He served for close to 13 years. And all that I appealed to President Clinton for is merely a humanitarian appeal. It is not based on exonerating Mr. Pollard. There is no exoneration for it. It is merely that he has been virtually in solitary confinement for 13 years. It's a very, very heavy sentence.

And since he was sent by us on a mistaken mission—not to work against the United States but, nevertheless, to break the laws of the United States—we hope that, on a purely humanitarian appeal, a way will be found to release him.

That is all I can tell you. It is not political. It is not to exonerate him. It is merely to end a very, very sorry case that has afflicted him and the people of Israel.

NOTE: The President's 167th news conference began at 1:50 p.m. in the Office of the Prime Minister. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine National Council (PNC).

Remarks With President Ezer Weizman of Israel on Lighting the Menorah in Jerusalem

December 13, 1998

President Weizman. Mr. President, Mrs. Clinton, I don't think that you will understand Hebrew by now, but with your affection to our country, with your support, I think this will come, too. [Laughter] If I may switch over to my Biblical Hebrew:

[At this point, President Weizman began speaking in Hebrew. The following translation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary.]

Beloved audience, dear audience, dear children—give me your hand, dear, you sang beautifully. I am happy to see you in our home, and I hope that this festival of Hanukkah will be a holiday which, perhaps, will rekindle a light in the right direction to strengthen the foundations of the State of Israel in its economy, its security, immigration, science, education, and its road to peace.

The President of the United States has come to us. He has come not just as a guest but to help, and we must appreciate this and see if it is possible to “push the cart forward” that, in the rest of the world, is known as being “stuck in the mud” but to us, rather is “stuck in the sand.” I don't know if it's easier to get out of sand than from mud. In any case, we must free it, and I hope, I am sure, that our Government will make all the necessary efforts.

The subject is not easy nor simple; it's complicated and complex. And from this night of Hanukkah, which is also the eve of the 21st century in less than 13 months, we will also begin to see a different type of life from our lives to date, despite our having made great achievements in the last 50 years.

President Clinton. Thank you very much, Mr. President and Mrs. Weizman. Let me say a special word of welcome in greetings on behalf of Hillary and myself to all the children who are here, and my thanks to these wonderful voices we have just heard sing. And I congratulate this young man for holding the candle all that time and not burning himself. Congratulations! [Laughter]

It is our great honor, all of the American delegation here, the members of our administration and the Members of Congress, to celebrate the first day of Hanukkah with the President and some of Israel's finest young people. This is a joyous time of year for Jewish people everywhere, here in Israel, in America, around the world, a moment to cherish your extraordinary past, to strive for a future worthy of your history.

On this occasion, you celebrate not simply a long week of happiness but thousands of years of triumph over adversity. You thank God not only for miracles but for hard-earned achievement. May this Menorah bring light through wisdom and illumination.

May it bring warmth through faith and fellowship. May it kindle a divine spark of peace touching all the peoples and places of the Holy Land. May it bring hope that after 50 years of building, security finally will come to all the people of Israel. And may it bring more than hope; may it ignite in each of you the will and strength to bring these hopes to reality.

All of you in this way can serve as candles full of light. Let our descendants look back at Israel at the turn of this new century and say the words that every Jewish child knows from the letters on the dreidel: A great miracle happened here.

Happy Hanukkah.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 5:20 p.m. in the Foyer of Beit Hannassi. In his remarks, he referred to President Weizman's wife, Reuma; and Moshe Metbabo, who lit the first candle in the menorah.

Statement on Crime Rates

December 13, 1998

The preliminary crime data released by the FBI today confirm that crime rates in America are continuing to decline for the seventh straight year. During the first 6 months of 1998, serious crime fell by another 5 percent—with large reductions in murder and other violent crimes leading the way. If these trends hold for the remainder of the year, the number of murders will have been cut by nearly one-third since Vice President Gore and I took office. This is remarkable progress, and it shows that our strategy of more police, tougher gun laws, and better crime prevention is making a difference. But our work is far from done. In the coming year, as we finish the job of putting 100,000 more police on the streets, we must continue to do everything we can to make all of our communities safer.

NOTE: This statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 12 but was embargoed for release until 6 p.m. on December 13.

Statement on the Death of Morris Udall

December 13, 1998

Hillary and I were saddened to learn of the death of Representative Morris Udall. Mo Udall was a leader whose uncommon wisdom, wit, and dedication won the love of his colleagues and the respect of all Americans. It was my pleasure to award him the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award a President can bestow.

Mo Udall represented the people of Arizona for more than three decades and guided the Nation forward on issues ranging from the reform of our election laws to improving the Postal Service. As a Presidential candidate and a leader of our party, his was an articulate voice reminding us of what our Nation can achieve when we leave no one behind. Above all, he was a devoted steward of the land that God gave us and was responsible for the preservation of some of our most important wilderness areas. It is fitting that the easternmost point of the United States, in the Virgin Islands, and the westernmost point, in Guam, are both named "Udall Point." The Sun will never set on the legacy of Mo Udall.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife Norma, their six children and many grandchildren, and the people of Arizona.

Remarks to the People of Israel in Jerusalem

December 13, 1998

Thank you very much. Let me begin by thanking the Prime Minister for his leadership for peace and his leadership of Israel; Mrs. Netanyahu, members of the Israeli Government; to the distinguished American delegation here. I want to say a special word of appreciation to the young man who spoke first, Ben Mayost. Didn't he do a good job? [Applause]

This is my third trip to Jerusalem as President, my third time in this magnificent hall, and the young woman who was with me here last time on the stage, Liad Modrik, is also here. Thank you; I'm really glad to see you.